

# THE BLACK HOLE

*THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY OF MIDWEST CONTESTERS*

Volume #1, Issue #2

August - September, 1985

## 1985 TO 1986 OFFICERS:

President - Steve Dubberstein NA9D 812 Larsen Ave Streamwood IL 60103

Illinois Chairman - Ralph Bellas K9ZD RR4 Bloomington IL 61701

Indiana Chairman - Tom Poland N9NC RR1 Box 306 Rossville IN 46065

Wisconsin Chairman - Gary Sutcliffe W9XT Rte 1 Box 196 Neosho Wisconsin 53059

Contest Activities Chairman - Ray Sokola K9RS 430 Hobblebush Dr Lake Zurich IL 60047

## PROCESSED SPEECH FROM THE PRESIDENT

Here is the first "real" newsletter of the Society. As promised, it contains lots of dope of interest to contesters, as well as information for the Illinois QSO party and a log sheet for the NCJ sprint.

The Society is up to 51 members as of the printing of The Black Hole, an excellent response from the contesters of the tri-state area. We have a very even distribution of members over the Wisconsin and Illinois areas that the club covers. Apparently the Hoosier Contest Club is going full blast in the Indianapolis area, so we don't have many members down that way. I hope we will be able to join together for a few contest efforts this year. Based on our distribution of members, we will have our fall meetings at the Peoria hamfest September 22 and at the Greyslake "Radio Expo" hamfest on September 28.

By the time you get this we should be affiliated with the ARRL. This is due to an excellent effort by our ARRL assistant director, K9KM; and the ARRL Central division director, W9PRN. It turned out that when I filed for affiliation, the next meeting of the ARRL executive committee, which votes clubs into affiliation, was only a week away. Howie and Ed made a few calls to insure quick processing of our application, and the result is we will be affiliated for the SS. Thanks to both in helping us out.

Don't forget about the 75 meter net we have on Monday nights at 7:00 P.M. local central time on 3858 KHZ +- 2 KHZ. The net is slowly getting bigger, and consists of alot of gabbing about upcoming contests, stations, etc. Jump in whenever you can and get to know each other, and let everyone know how the last contest went.

A rather sad note to report is the ARRL has voted to eliminate the ARRL QSO parties. These were rather popular 10 hour domestic contests held twice a year, the remains of the old CD parties. I have no idea why they were cancelled, but a rather interesting note is K1K1, New England director for the ARRL, seconded the motion to eliminate the contest. K1K1 is a rather active contester, so I suspect there is alot of unknown variables in this move. The cancellation of the QSO parties leave the SS, Field Day, and the Sprints as the only nationwide domestic contests that are "multiple band."

The September issue of QST contains a rather good article on contesting in general, including a box explaining the drive behind big guns. It also has a rather well done box dividing up all the major contests by month. Check it out.

As a new club, one of the biggest tasks we have ahead of us is making our name known and respected throughout the country. We can do this through sprint teams and our performance in club competition. I would like to set two goals for this contest season in order to bring us to instant "big contest club" status. The first is to submit more than 50 entries in the SS for the Society. By doing this we will appear "out of the blue" in the UNLIMITED category - an impressive move, to say the least. This will require all those eligible for ARRL club competition to submit their logs, no matter how many contacts you make, in order for us to

accomplish this. The second goal is to WIN the club competition in the CQ magazine 160 meter contests held in January. As a midwest club, a 160 contest is about the only contest we have a shot at decent propagation compared to those in the east and west. We have the firepower and numbers with our membership to pull it off. So get those 160 verticles and beverages ready... Let's win it. Upcoming issues of the newsletter will focus on those contests that are forthcoming...

The NCJ sprints are almost here - see the article for details. We will try to enter at least one team for phone and cw. Both QST and CQ have screwed up the date in some manner - this may be a big chance for our sprint teams to place high as everyone else may be confused. Make sure to note the CORRECT dates - September 8 and 15 GMT - and get on for the sprints.

Attached is a rule sheet and entry form for the new Illinois QSO party. The QSO party has been revised to a new 7 hour format, similar to the immensely popular Wisconsin QSO party. This is a great way to do super rates, no matter what type of station you have. We will not enter the club competition for the QSO party, and I encourage those of you scattered throughout Illinois to enter with your club or "team" to get some good intra-Illinois competition going. If Illinois supports this QSO party as Wisconsin has its own, it will be a sure seven hours of bedlam and fun... join in and make it a success.

If you know of anyone else who would like to become a member, bring them along to one of the fall meetings to join or have them send me three bucks with their address and if or not they are an ARRL member. The best way to have a club grow is by word of mouth.

Please try and make one of the meetings described elsewhere in the newsletter, especially if you live outside the 50 mile circle so we are all eligible for the SS and ARRL DX club competition.

73, Steve NA9D

## THE NCJ SPRINTS de AC9C

The NCJ sprints are held each September and February. The National Contest Journal sponsors a CW and a Phone sprint, both four hours. The September CW sprint is Sept 8 0000-0359 Z (Saturday, Sept 7 local) and the phone is Sept 15 0000-0359 Z (Saturday, Sept 14 local). Please note these are CONFIRMED DATES as found in two issues of the NCJ-- both CQ and QST screwed up the dates. This contest sponsors "team" competition, consisting of 10 stations per team. About the only qualification in team competition is a team must be registered before the contest begins. I will be acting as sprint team coordinator. The Society will sponsor teams for both the CW and Phone sprints. To get on a team for the Society, just do one of the following:

1. Get on the Monday night net and let it be known you wish to be on a team
2. Call Mike Taylor, AC9C, at 312-260-9208 (home) or 312-576-3289 (work) two or more days before the sprint

For the CW sprint, you will need to call as this newsletter will probably arrive just before the two day deadline. Rules for the sprint can be found in QST or CQ. A copy of a log sheet appears at the end of the newsletter.

If you have never done a sprint before, don't feel pressured to get on a team. Please do try to make a few QSO's in each sprint, though, to get a feel for the contest. The sprints are the only contest with a "QSY" rule, which says you may work only one station by soliciting. This prevents the guns from hogging frequency, and can take a little while to get used to. This gives the contest a special "rhythm."

Our future sprint teams will be divided up based on past scores submitted for the Society, in order to give us one "competitive" team, This should provide incentive to move "up to the first team," etc. Give the sprints a try, they are alot of fun.

## FALL MEETINGS

There will be two meetings in the month of September for the Society of Midwest Contesters, both at hamfests. We are required to have four in person meetings a year to participate in ARRL club competition. If you live outside 50 miles of club center, you MUST attend one of the meetings on the next page in order to be eligible for the SS or ARRL DX contest. To see if you are outside 50 miles, check the membership list or your mailing label

for one of the following codes:

LE - "Local Eligible" - You are inside 50 miles and are not required to attend a meeting to be eligible for ARRL contests.

DN - "Distant Non-eligible" - You are outside 50 miles of club center and should attend one of the meetings to become eligible for ARRL contests.

DE - "Distant Eligible" - You are outside 50 miles and are currently eligible for club competition in ARRL contests (nobody yet as we have not had a meeting).

Dates and locations of the meetings:

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 - PEORIA SUPERFEST - 12:00 NOON

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 - GREYSLAKE "RADIO EXPO" HAMFEST - 1:00 P.M.

In both cases, NA9D and company will have a car set up with a display and poster stating exactly where the meeting will be held on the hamfest grounds. We will also announce the location of the meeting over the PA, if possible. The meetings have been set at hamfests to try and make them as accessible as possible for the entire membership. The meetings will consist of introductions, talk of Society goals and ambitions for the upcoming season, and possibly a short program. You can feel free to sit in for as much or little as you like, but please stop and sign in so you are eligible, if necessary, for ARRL club competition.

### TREASURY REPORT as of 8/31/85

Dues collected as of 8/31	\$153.00
Postage	-\$ 38.50
Mailing labels	-\$ 4.00
Newsletter supplies	-\$ 8.61
End balance	\$101.89

### A REVIEW OF THE KANSAS CITY CONTEST KEYS de NA9D

As part of the decisions in assembling a station, a choice had to be made on a contest keyer. Among the factors are cost and performance, as well as reliability. About this time I observed the Kansas City Contest Keyer that Doug, W9WI, won at Dayton 1984 for placing first in the Kansas City DX Club CW pile up contest. I then purchased a unit for myself.

Externally, the keyer is quite small and consists of a speed control and a 16 digit keypad as I/O. The back has positive and negative keying inputs, a 8-18 vots power supply input (a plug-in wall supply is included), a DIN plug for paddle input and external memory buttons, and a wing nut for grounding (Important).

Upon power up, the keyer functions normally with the speed at 20 WPM. What sets the KC keyer apart from the rest is the ability to "nest" commands in memory, along with CW. There are 14 memories and 15 "commands" accessible from the keypad. A command is accessed by first hitting "\*" and then the command number. Commands are:

1. Auto - Automatic character spacing on/off
2. Speed - To set with keypad. Wherever speed is set in WPM will be where speed is now adjustable with the pot (nice).
3. Rate - Makes possible sending faster letters at a slower speed from memory
4. Paus - Insert pause of xx in tenths of seconds
5. Wait - Wait for paddle insert
6. Weig - Adjust weight
7. Load - Load memory x
8. Merg - Merge memory x with y
9. Tune - Key transmitter until a paddle is hit, etc.
0. Tone - Change sidetone frequency
- A. Rev - Reverse paddle (left/right handed)
- B. Out - Turn output to rig on or off
- C. WPM - Send present speed in CW
- D. Apnd - Add to the end of a memory
- \*. Decrement or increment the serial number counter

Most of the commands can be stored in a memory with the CW - making it possible to do an almost limitless number of things with the keyer. Take the SS as an example. Along with loading the normal CQ SS's and QRZ, one can have a memory that does the exchange with serial number. Other memories could be devoted to: a ten second tune up button, buttons that automatically change to a preset speed so one does not need to fiddle with the speed knob, a button to decrement the serial number or increment the serial number. One of my favorites when using the keyer for serial number contests is to have a memory that turns off the output keying circuit, turns on the sidetone, decrements the serial number, sends the serial number, and then reverses the above process. The end result: a memory that sends your next serial number with the sidetone and not on the air, and then returns the keyer to normal use. This type of "memory command" is typical of the keyer, indicative of its versatility. Other uses are looping CQ's, etc.

Electrically, I have had no problem keying either positive keying rigs or Drake lines. The keyer can be sensitive to power line glitches, however; and a battery back up (available as an option) would be a good idea for reliability. I have heard of others having slight RF problems, but I have experienced none as long as the keyer is grounded to the supplied grounding post on the back.

Although capable of almost anything desired, it is very simple to learn to use. A comprehensive manual with examples is included, as well as a periodic mailing describing any updates and info for the keyer.

The drawbacks? The on/off switch is the fully counter-clockwise position of the speed knob, and in the heat of a contest I have shut the keyer off when trying to reduce speed, and dumped all the memories. Also after about a year, the labels on the keypad describing functions are starting to peel off.

If you are an active CW contester, the KC keyer is the ultimate CW machine. The KC keyer is available for \$199.95 from Lance Johnson Engineering, P.O. Box 7363, Kansas City MO 64116.

## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

A "\*" indicates an event involving direct Society of Midwest Contesters participation  
All dates are "local time"

* September 7	NCJ Sprint CW
* September 14	NCJ Sprint Phone
* September 22	Society meeting - Peoria Superfest
* September 28	Society meeting - Greystake "Radio Expo" Hamfest
October 6	Illinois QSO Party
* October 25-27	CQWW DX Contest Phone
* November 2-3	SS CW
* November 16-17	SS Phone
* November 22-24	CQWW CW (note this is NOT Thanksgiving weekend)
December 7-8	ARRL 160 Meter Contest
December 14-15	ARRL 10 Meter Contest

## OTHER ITEMS FOR POSSIBLE CONSUMPTION

Quite a few comments have been received on the awards program, concerning categories etc. The categories will be finalized after the fall meetings, to allow for greatest input. There is talk of a possible "Quarter million point" award for combined SS scores and a "Half million point award" for combined DX contest scores. Let the officers know your feelings.

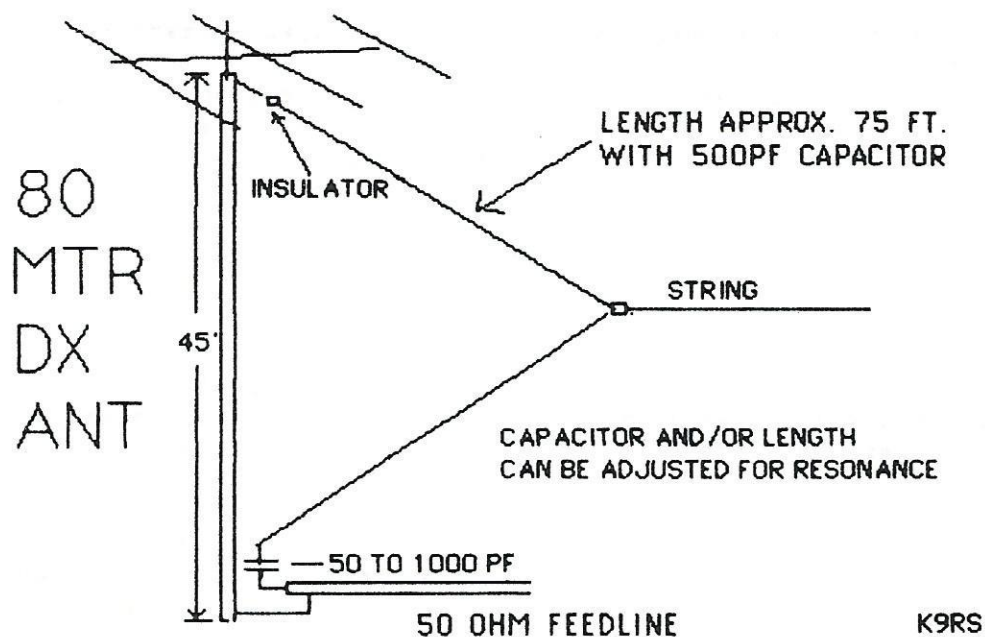
Gary Schwartz, K9GS, is offering his services as an operator for any contest. His address appears in the membership list.

Material from The Black Hole may be reproduced providing proper credit is given to The Black Hole and the author.

Copies of log sheets and summary sheets for upcoming contests will appear in future issues as well... please note the intent of these sheets are originals for your own reproduction, so there may be different material on the back side.

## 80 METER DX ANTENNA de K9RS

This 80 meter DX antenna in various forms has performed well at K9RS. Originally the tower was only 35 feet tall but even then the antenna performed well enough to work 110 countries in four months. The capacitance value and wire length can be jockeyed to resonance. Increasing either or both decreases frequency and vice-versa. Try to use about 300 or 400 pf though for best match to a 50 ohm line. Even small fixed silver mica capacitors have been used successfully but transmit type "doorknobs" etc. are preferable, or use a variable for easy tuning and phone to CW change. Also use as many radials as possible. I like to lay them down on the ground just before it snows.



# The Contest Roundtable

Conducted by Gary Sutcliffe W9XT

The Contest Roundtable is a forum for the discussion of contest techniques, strategies, and equipment of interest to radio contesters. It is hoped that by sharing some of these ideas we all can become better contesters.

In each issue of *The Black Hole*, the Contest Roundtable will ask a question on a particular aspect of contesting. Readers can send their comments to me and I will list, tabulate or somehow put them into a form which I hope will be interesting and entertaining. The results of the question of the issue will be published in the next *Black Hole*.

Some possible topics for future columns include: When do you take your breaks in SS? How do you decide what band to be on in a DX contest? What type of dupe sheet do you use? Do you think contests should include the WARC bands? Other than the rig, amp and antennas, what station accessories do you find helpful in a contest?

Your ideas on subjects are welcome. I will pick subjects based on your input as well as subjects pertaining to a particular upcoming contest.

In order to make this column work, I will need your comments each issue. Most of us find it difficult to sit down and write a long letter or an article, so I am going to make it as easy as possible for you. Just cut out the bottom portion of each column, check a few boxes and jot down your comments. You don't have to write page after page (unless you want to); a few sentences will do. Finally don't forget to mail it in.

Since some suggestions may apply only to big gun stations and some are more appropriate to smaller stations, I will try to categorize responses accordingly. To make it easier, one of the boxes to check off with your response will be your station class as defined in the awards program of the society. Of course techniques for classes other than that of your station will be welcome. Techniques you used while in the process of building your station or learned as a guest operator at a super-station will be of interest. Hopefully each installment of *The Contest Roundtable* will contain at least one new idea that you can try in the next contest.

That covers the basic format of *The Contest Roundtable*. Remember that I need your responses to make this an interesting column. Be sure to send me your comments soon after you receive your copy of *The Black Hole* to ensure that they make it to print in the next issue.

This brings me to the topic for the next column: Athletes don't wait until the day of the big meet to get into shape. What about contesters? The fall contest season is several months away. *How do you keep your contest skills sharp during the off season?* Let us know your answer.

.....

Send to: Gary Sutcliffe W9XT  
Rte 1 Box 196  
Neosho, Wis. 53059

Your Call \_\_\_\_\_

Your station class: \_\_\_ Class 3 (<200W, no beam); \_\_\_ Class 2 (<200 W, unlimited antennas); \_\_\_ Class 1 (>200 W, small tribander, no 40/80 beams); \_\_\_ Unlimited (anything legal)

What would you like future columns to cover?

Next topic: How do you keep your contest skills sharp during the off season?